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Ministry of
Consumer and
Commercial
Relations

(13)

Governor
Publications

Does what in consumer matters?

Because the federal and provincial governments both have responsibility for consumer legislation, sorting out their respective duties can be confusing. But knowing the difference is important if you want to take advantage of the many services they offer.

Basically, the Ontario Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations helps ensure that businesses act fairly. Its federal counterpart, Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada, regulates the products consumers buy.

Both perform a number of other functions for businesses as well as consumers including education programs to promote consumer self-reliance.

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DEPOSITORY LIBRARY MATERIAL

Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations

Business practices

Protects ethical business conduct toward consumers; protects consumers from misleading or unfair sales practices and other consumer representations; establishes a cooling-off period in which consumers may cancel contracts with door-to-door sellers; and regulates collection agencies, mortgage brokers, motor vehicle dealers, travel agencies and door-to-door sales.

Consumer services bureaus

Resolves consumer complaints; and acts as a mediator with consumers and businesses.

11 St. E., Rm. 206
Kitchener, Ont. N2N 1G4
29-8177

11 St. E., P.O. Box 5600
Waterloo, Ont. N2A 2P3
29-7150

11 St. E., Ste. 102
Waterloo, Ont. K2A 1C4
25-3679

11 St. E., N.
Waterloo, Ont. K9J 3G6
23-8728

11 St.
Waterloo, Ont. P3B 2J8
25-8878

11 St. S., Box 5000
Waterloo, Ont. P7C 5G6
25-1641

Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada

Bureau of consumer affairs

- **Hazardous Products Act**
Prevents products with hidden hazards from reaching the consumer. Examples: infants' furniture, toys, and household chemicals must meet these safety requirements.
- **Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act**
Requires that most pre-packaged consumer products display certain basic information on the labels to help consumers decide whether or not to buy.
- **Textile Labelling Act**
Makes sure that articles made from fabrics (clothes, yard goods, upholstered furniture etc.) are properly labelled to let you know fibre content and identity of the manufacturer. Care instruction symbols (those coloured symbols of a wash tub, iron etc.) are not required by law but are used on a voluntary basis by manufacturers.
- Several food laws are enforced by this department. Food inspectors make sure that you're really getting what you pay for. They examine fresh fruit, vegetables, poultry, meat and dairy products to ensure that these products are not misrepresented or offered fraudulently.
- **Weights and Measures Act**
Ensures that all weighing and measuring devices used to establish a price to the consumer are accurate. This means that butchers' scales, gas pumps, fuel oil tank trucks, and many other such devices are checked regularly by federal inspectors.
- **Electricity and Gas Inspection Acts**
Make sure that electricity and gas meters are accurate. If you think your meter is inaccurate you should first check with the utility to see if they have an explanation. If you're not satisfied, you can request that your meter be checked by a federal inspector. For a small fee he will test it for accuracy; if you're proved right the fee will be refunded and your bills adjusted.

Consumer and
Corporate Affairs Canada

Consommation
et Corporations Canada



Who does what in consumer matters?

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DEPOSITORY LIBRARY MATERIAL

Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations

Business practices

- promotes ethical business conduct toward consumers;
- helps protect consumers from misleading or unfair sales pitches and other consumer representations;
- provides a cooling-off period in which consumers may cancel contracts with door-to-door sellers; and
- registers collection agencies, mortgage brokers, motor vehicle dealers, travel agencies and door-to-door sellers.

Consumer services bureaus

- handle consumer complaints; and
- act as a mediator with consumers and businesses.

143 Main St. E., Rm. 206
Hamilton, Ont. L8N 1G4
(416) 529-8177

80 Dundas St. E., P.O. Box 5600
London, Ont. N6A 2P3
(519) 679-7150

1675 Carling Ave., Ste. 102
Ottawa, Ont. K2A 1C4
(613) 725-3679

139 George St. N.
Peterborough, Ont. K9J 3G6
(705) 743-8728

295 Bond St.
Sudbury, Ont. P3B 2J8
(705) 675-8878

435 James St. S., Box 5000
Thunder Bay, Ont. P7C 5G6
(807) 475-1641

Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada

Bureau of consumer affairs

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Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations (cont.)
555 Yonge St.
Toronto, Ont. M7A 2H6
(416) 963-0321

250 Windsor Ave., 6th Floor
Windsor, Ont. N9A 6V9
(519) 254-6413

Consumer Information Centre

- provides a multilingual telephone inquiry service which accepts collect calls from anywhere in the province at (416) 963-1111;
- conducts workshops and individual counselling sessions for consumer educators; and
- lends consumer education resource materials.

Companies

- registers sole proprietorships, partnerships and provincial corporations; and
- maintains records on businesses operating in Ontario.

Ontario Securities Commission

- supervises trading in stocks, bonds, commodity futures and other securities to promote a fair and healthy investment climate.

Pension Commission of Ontario

- registers and sets ground rules for company pension plans.

Financial institutions

- supervises insurance, loan and trust companies as well as credit unions and co-operatives to ensure they will be able to honor their financial commitments;
- assists with consumer complaints about these financial centres; and
- supervises prearranged funeral services, perpetual care trust funds and cemetery layout.

Property rights

- registers ownership of property to ensure orderly real estate sales; and
- registers personal property such as cars which have been pledged as collateral so that consumers can make sure their purchases are free of liens.

Technical Standards

- develops safety standards for elevators, boilers, fuel-handling equipment and other devices; and
- administers the Ontario Building Code, which sets standards for new buildings. (Enforcement and inspection is a municipal responsibility.)

Registrar general

- records and issues certificates for births, deaths, marriages and divorces; and
- administers The Marriage Act.

Residential Tenancy Commission

- administers The Residential Tenancies Act, 1979 which combines The Rent Review Act, and The Landlord and Tenant Act; and
- requires landlords to receive approval by the Commission for any rent increase above six per cent annually.

Theatres branch

- classifies and approves movies and videotapes.

Ontario Racing Commission

- regulates horse racing.

Lotteries branch

- licenses and supervises lotteries, excluding those government-operated, and games of chance for charitable purposes.

Athletics Commission

- regulates boxing, wrestling and other professional sports.

Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada, (cont.)

Bureau of intellectual property

- Registers patents, trade marks, industrial designs and copyrights.

Bureau of competition policy

- *Combines Investigation Act*
Focuses on maintaining a competitive market system by prohibiting mergers and monopolies which are detrimental to the public interest.
- Consumers are probably most familiar with the misleading advertising sections of this legislation which prohibit advertising that is false or materially misleading. Even if an ad is technically accurate the advertiser can be prosecuted if the general impression is materially misleading.

Bureau of corporate affairs

- Grants charters of federal incorporation.
- Bankruptcy branch supervises bankruptcy proceedings for both insolvent companies and individuals.

Other services of interest

The consumer services branch carries out extensive programs to inform both consumers and businessmen of their rights and responsibilities in the marketplace. Workshops are also provided for consumer educators. The consumer services branch receives consumer complaints and inquiries which fall within its purview. The Department can take action on a complaint if the matter is within the scope of its enforced legislation. Department offices are located in the following communities:

P.O. Box 1180
Belleville, Ont. Phone: 962-3439

25 St. Clair Ave. East, 7th floor
Toronto, Ont. Phone: 966-8124

20 Hughson St. S. 3rd Floor
Hamilton, Ont. Phone 523-2991

781 Richmond St.
London, Ont. Phone: 679-4032

1283 Sparks St.
Sudbury, Ont. Phone: 566-0591

430 Waterloo St. S.
Thunder Bay, Ont. Phone: 623-5265

240 Bank Street
Brunswick Building
Ottawa, Ont. Phone: 995-0853

Resource materials

A variety of free publications is available on request. These fact sheets and brochures describe the department's legislation and provide general advice on the marketplace.

Material is suitable for the general public; all publications are printed in both official languages and may be ordered in bulk while supplies last. Inquiries and orders may be placed with any of the district offices. Resource materials for specialized groups include:

- "Parents Kit", an information folder containing home safety material designed for new parents. This package is distributed through hospitals.
- Home Safe Home, an audio-visual kit distributed to schools for K-3 classes, describing Hazardous Product symbols and emphasizing home safety.
- Food Basics, a kit for loaning to group leaders interested in food and food buymanship.
- A small selection of audio-visual materials is available for use by educators. Resources may be borrowed at no charge and include films, slides, video cassettes and sound-on-slide presentations. Subject matter concerns departmental legislation. Interested educators should contact the nearest district office providing at least three weeks notice.



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